

U.S. Statement by Garold N. Larson to the Conference on Disarmament

Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. U.S. Mission to the Conference on Disarmament August 20, 2009

Madame President,

I wish to begin by welcoming the Ambassador of the Netherlands, and thanking you, your delegation, and the collective P6 Presidency for your unceasing efforts to bring the promise of CD/1864, our consensus Program of Work for 2009, to fruition. As we committed at the commencement of your Presidency, my delegation has given its full support to those efforts, and shares your disappointment, and the disappointment of nearly all in this chamber, that we have yet to begin the negotiations and substantive discussions set out so clearly in CD/1864.

Madame President,

As President Obama stated clearly in Prague on April 5, the United States is committed to "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." He went on to say that the first step to stopping the spread of these weapons is a "new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons." As you know, the inclusion of a verification provision represents a major evolution in United States policy, made in the spirit of pursuing our mutual goals through negotiation and focused discussion. We, the members of the Conference on Disarmament, agreed to take up that task on May 29, and the global community gave a sigh of relief that the CD was, at long last, back at work. It is, then, profoundly disappointing that nearly three months later, we have yet to accomplish the simple, straight-forward, procedural task of agreeing on a schedule of work.

We understand and expect that serious national security concerns will be fully

addressed in our negotiations on an FMCT and in our substantive discussions on other issues, as set out in our Program of Work. That is the venue for doing so, and that is at the core of the principle of consensus. Make no mistake, however – what we have seen in the past few weeks in the CD is procedural faultfinding that has cost valuable time and has thwarted the stated goals and aspirations of the international community to pursue in this multilateral forum the central questions of nuclear proliferation, arms control, and disarmament. For years in this chamber, we heard the protests of those seeking progress on these issues; we heard the frustrations of those seeking a role for the CD; and we argued over balance in the program of work. Those issues were settled in CD/1864. We therefore are left wondering as to the motivations of those who have blocked agreement since we reconvened in early August.

We know that the negotiations and substantive discussions ahead of us will be hard, complex and prolonged, and we will need to be open to listening and responding to all points of view put forward in these discussions. But the magnitude of the challenge should not deter us from getting on with our work with genuine commitment and engagement. It is time for all of us in this chamber, without exception, to again demonstrate that we have the determination to make our efforts concrete and credible and to make the CD a viable instrument for progress. The international community is watching and will draw the correct conclusions as to whether the CD is to regain its relevance and stature as the world's sole multilateral negotiating forum or revert to inertia and the failed patterns of the past. The choice is one that we can only make together.

Thank you, Madame President.